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Agriculture Ministry monitoring monsoon

Gargi Parsai



The Hindu Children having fun as thick monsoon clouds hover over Ramakrishna beach in Visakhapatnam on Sunday. Photo: K.R. Deepak

States told to have contingency plans ready, post-delay in onset in Kerala

Agriculture experts and officials are closely monitoring the advance of the southwest monsoon, which is crucial not only for the important summer kharif crop but also the socio-economic wellbeing of the country.

There are apprehensions that with farm growth having slowed down in the pre-wheat harvest quarter to 1.7 per cent, if the monsoon were to be deficient, then the country's crisis will deepen.

“We are closely monitoring the situation,” Agriculture Secretary Ashish Bahuguna told The Hindu. “We hope for a normal monsoon but are prepared to face any eventuality.”

The delay of five days in the onset of monsoon over Kerala and its gingerly movement has made Central government officials sit up and sound the State governments to be ready with contingency plans that advise farmers on what seeds to sow, the cropping methodology to adopt in scarce conditions, how to control unwanted pests and take care of cattle, fodder and feed.

“The Ministry has plans ready for various agro-ecologies and can advise farmers on delayed monsoon sowing, deficient rains, arid, semi-arid and drought-prone zones,” Mr. Bahuguna said.

Although the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast the qualitative monsoon season rainfall likely to be 99 per cent of the Long Period Average with a model error of 5 per cent either way, earlier predictions by some international scientists about a below normal monsoon in South Asia is making the people concerned uncomfortable, despite the country being blessed with overflowing granaries.

“Yes, there is some cause for concern but not a great deal,” said Planning Commission Member (Agriculture) Abhijit Sen, “and there is no reason to ask farmers not to sow. They must be prepared to sow in time.”

According to him, the monsoon was delayed and the El Nino effect might kick off in August, but the rain is most likely to be normal in July, the most crucial month.

NAGAPATTINAM, June 11, 2012

Subsidy for cultivating fodder in over 150 acres

: The government has proposed to issue subsidy for fodder cultivation in over 150 acres for the forthcoming year, here in the district. The scheme is set to cover over 600 farmers, and has been envisaged with a vision of ensuring sustained availability of forage for cattle under the free livestock scheme.

Speaking at a special conservation meet on ‘Umbalacherry’ breed cattle here at Thalainayar, on Saturday, Collector T.Munusamy underlined the significance of cattle for agriculture with specific reference to Umbalacheri breed.

Umbalacheri cattle belonged to a sturdy breed with an ability to contribute vitally to labour intensive agricultural activity. Their capacity for hardships was an asset, and is widely used for ploughing and pulling carts. According to Mr.Munusamy, the heavysset bulls of Umbalacheri breed could carry loads for a sustained distance of up to 20 kilometres.

Speaking in the light of the free cattle Scheme, Collector said that the Scheme of free cattle for destitute and single women below poverty line was being implemented in villages.

About 50 beneficiaries were being listed out for milch stock worth Rs.30,000 each through the concerned Gram Sabhas under the free cattle scheme.

To encourage fodder cultivation for the cattle, a subsidy of Rs.3,000 has been provisioned for cultivation in quarter acre land. According to Mr.Munusamy, with renewed interventions towards livestock breeding, a sustained availability of forage would be incentive for people to own cattle.

Underlining the crucial link between livestock and agriculture, the consultation stressed the significance of protecting the gene pool of traditional breeds in order to proliferate biodiversity in an age of hybrids and genetic engineering.

Conservation meet on 'Umbalacherry' breed organised at Thalainayar

CHENNAI, June 11, 2012

A portal to disseminate information on agricultural productivity

The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) has launched a portal to disseminate farm-related information to improve agricultural productivity and farm income for small and marginal ryots.

Launched in partnership with the e-Extension Centre of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), the ICICI Knowledge Park (IKP) Centre for Advancement in Agricultural Practice (ICAAP), the portal (<http://www.advanceagripractice.in>) currently provides data on rice, pulses (black gram and green gram), sugarcane, banana, and coconut in the delta region of Tamil Nadu (Thanjavur and Tiruvarur districts). It will in due course be scaled up to include data on major commodities such as wheat, cotton, groundnut, tapioca, turmeric, mango, and maize,

fodder crops and animal husbandry topics such as cattle, buffalo, goat, sheep, and poultry farming as well as tribal agriculture.

“We're aware of the challenges of information dissemination in a linguistically diverse country like India. So we will be making available content in regional languages as we move along,” said Kwadwo Asenso-Okyere, director of IFPRI's Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office.

In Tamil by year-end

The Tamil content is expected to be ready by the year-end. The IFPRI will also explore various dissemination platforms that are farmer-friendly such as text messages, street plays and bulletins on radio and television.

The data available on the portal includes region specific information such as soil fertility status, potential hydrogen (PH), land use patterns and cropping patterns, availability of high quality agricultural inputs such as certified seeds and fertilizers, news regarding agriculture-related government schemes and agri-credit institutions and information on procurement centres, traders and markets.

The portal also features success stories and case studies highlighting farmers' best practices and experiences that can be emulated.

It also seeks to serve as a gateway for knowledge and best practices from the CGIAR (a global research partnership for a food secure future), other international agricultural research centres, and national agricultural research institutes.

Sandeep Saxena, Tamil Nadu Agricultural Production Commissioner and Agriculture Secretary, appreciated the efforts in developing the portal and suggested strategies for promoting this portal on national level.

He also urged the need for ICT information on agriculture, and the necessity of reaching all farmers with instant agricultural advice.

C.V. Krishnan, president of the Institute of Financial Management and Research described the portal as a “one-stop source of information from inputs to credit, markets, and prices.”

CHENNAI, June 11, 2012

Substantial hike in allocation for Animal Husbandry

The State government has substantially increased the annual allocation for activities of the Animal Husbandry department. In 2011-2012, the allocation was hiked to Rs.600 crore and this year, Rs. 814 crore. This had been done to achieve a number of objectives including the increase in productivity of livestock. In the years prior to the previous financial year, the Department was getting around Rs. 400 crore.

Stating this, K. Shanmugam, Principal Secretary (Finance), who inaugurated a seminar on advanced technologies in livestock production for socio-economic empowerment of rural farmers, said the government, which was conscious of the fact that 40 per cent of the State population was dependent on the primary sector, was giving top priority to the sector. This was evident in Vision 2023 document.

With a view to improving infrastructure of the sector, a sum of Rs.20 crore was set apart last year and this was repeated this year too. Similarly, more number of veterinary doctors were being appointed in rural areas.

Gagandeep Singh Bedi, Secretary of the Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries department, explained that as any impact on livestock would have a direct bearing on the rural population, the government had decided to provide perceptible hike in the allocation for animal husbandry. He pointed out that Tamil Nadu now stood fourth in milk production through cooperative societies and fifth in meat production.

KALPETTA, June 11, 2012

New project to improve vegetable production

Minister says aim is to attain self-sufficiency

Minister for Agriculture K.P. Mohanan has said that the government will launch a new project to produce all types of vegetables to cater the needs of the State.

Launching various development projects in the district during the current fiscal in connection with the first anniversary celebrations of the United Democratic Front (UDF) government at the SKMJ Higher Secondary School auditorium here on Sunday, Mr. Mohanan said the project

would be launched at Vattavada and Kanthallur grama panchayats in Idukki district and selected grama panchayats in Wayanad district. All modern technologies would be used for the project as it aimed at attaining self-sufficiency in vegetable production, the Minister said. Mr. Mohanan said the government would launch high-tech farms in 20 selected grama panchayats and deserving status would be given to Wayanad when implementing the project. The Minister distributed farming implements worth Rs.182.50 lakh to 30 women self-help groups and farmers, and loan waiver certificates to coffee farmers under the Coffee Board loan waiver scheme. Minister for Welfare of Scheduled Tribes and Youth Affairs P.K. Jayalakshmi distributed title deeds of land to 333 tribal people at Aralam in Kannur district. M.V. Shreyamskumar, MLA, presided over the function. M.I. Shanavas, MP, laid the foundation stone for agriculture common facility centre and I.C. Balakrishnan, MLA, distributed soil health cards to farmers.

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- *To be launched in selected panchayats in Idukki, Wayanad*
 - *High-tech farms in 20 selected grama panchayats*
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ADILABAD, June 11, 2012

Farmers hope for good rainfall this monsoon



Grim scenario: The view of dried up Satnala medium irrigation project in Jainad mandal in Adilabad district. —PHOTO: BY ARRANGEMENT

The change in season witnessed during the last three or four days has raised hopes of farmers in Adilabad district who expect the monsoon to be good enough to fill all the irrigation tanks this instance.

Almost all the irrigation projects had received lesser inflows the past season owing to the deficit rainfall in the State.

Canals dried up

Most of the projects, like Satnala medium irrigation tank in Jainad mandal, Ralivagu project in Mancherial mandal have dried up completely while many others have water levels at much below the dead storage capacity.

Farmers were faced with difficulty in irrigating their fields during the last rabi season due to acute shortage of water.

Not impressive

The irrigation scenario is not as hunky dory in the district as it is given to believe through the number of projects that have come up here.

Barring the old Sadarmat anicut, none of the latter day projects has watered the extent of lands as promised.

The Khanapur channel, as the Sadarmat is also known as, was constructed during the time of the Nizam of Hyderabad meant to irrigate 6,848 acres. It has kept the promise for the last 120 years of its existence on the Godavari river.

Irrigated land

The famous major irrigation project, Kadem irrigates nearly 47,000 acres against an assured 68,500 acres while the Vattivagu project irrigates only about half its promised 24,500 acres.

The ayacut at Swarna project in Sarangapur mandal has stabilised at 7,000 acres instead of the 8,945 acres for which it was designed and the Chalimelavagu and Satnala projects irrigate only 3,600 acres and 14,000 acres of the assured 6,000 acres and 24,000 acres respectively.

There are other irrigation projects such as the Komram Bheem project, which has been opened last year however, the water could not be utilised as it has not developed the canal system required to irrigate the about 25,000 acres.

Much of the 10 tmc of irrigation water that was impounded initially can still be seen stored in its reservoir in Asifabad mandal.

KAKINADA, June 11, 2012

Ryots hit the road over supply of cotton seed

They are demanding a particular variety



A file photo of cotton farmers staging a dharna seeking adequate supply of Neeraja variety cotton seed at Gollaprolu in East Godavari district.

Cotton farmers are queuing in front of a particular seed shop at Gollaprolu and resorting to skirmish to get the seed. Despite bringing their Pattadar passbook and cash, they are not sure about getting the seed due to the huge competition. However, there is no dearth of cotton seed in the district, as the officials have made arrangements in advance to distribute seed to all the farmers.

The problem has begun when a majority of farmers are behind a particular seed variety, the availability of which is very less in the district.

Subsequently, the farmers are looking for alternatives such as obtaining recommendation letters from the political leaders and buying the seed in the black market. MRC-7201 (Neeraja) remained the most sought after seed variety for the cotton farmers from the district, due to the record yield registered by some farmers who sown the seed in their fields in the last two years.

Cotton was cultivated in 9,500 hectares last year and the area is expected to go up to 13,000 hectares this year. Though the total seed requirement has been estimated as 33,000 packets, the Department of Agriculture has allocated 73,000 packets (each weighing 450 grams) and released 55,000 packets. However, only 5,000 packets of Neeraja variety seed has been allocated to the district, as the entire allocation by the company to the State remained six lakh packets. "It doesn't make any difference whatever the seed company is. We are advising the farmers to opt for BT-2 seed, which is of various companies available with us," says D. Prameela, Joint Director of Agriculture. Farmers from the upland mandals are being converted from paddy to cotton and the extent has been increased from 7,000 hectares to 13,000 hectares in just two years. "Neeraja is giving good yield. That is why farmers are ready to buy it by paying Rs. 1,800 per packet, against the MRP of Rs. 980 per packet in the black market," says Buddhala Gangadharam, who cultivates cotton in two acres at Gollaprolu says. "We are trying our best to educate the farmers on seed variety. But, farmers from Gollaprolu, Prattipadu, Ranampeta, and Tuni areas are not ready to accept any other variety except the Neeraja," says Ms. Prameela.

TIRUCHI, June 11, 2012

Mettur level

: The water level at the Mettur Dam stood at 79.34 feet on Sunday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 1,372 cusecs and the discharge 1,400 cusecs.

hindustantimes

Mon, 11 Jun 2012

water

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Monday, Jun 11

Max Min

41.2° | 26.1°

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs

Sunrise: 6:35

Humidity: 55%

Sunset: 18:03

Wind: Normal

Barometer: 1002

Tomorrow's Forecast



Rainy

Tuesday, Jun 12

Max Min

36° | 30°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday Jun 13	Thursday Jun 14	Friday Jun 15	Saturday Jun 16	Sunday Jun 17
37° 29°	34° 28°	37° 28°	34° 28°	34° 29°
Rainy	Rainy	Rainy	Rainy	Rainy

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

11 JUN, 2012, 07.47AM IST, REUTERS

Black sea wheat futures: Full of promise & pitfalls

The new Black Sea wheat futures contract launched last week on the CME certainly sounds like a good idea, given that the region accounts for roughly a quarter of world wheat trade and is located on the doorstep of Europe, the Middle East, and Africa -- all major importers of wheat and other grains.

But uptake and use of the contract may prove slow going since two of the region's top wheat exporters -- Russia and Ukraine -- have a track record of renegeing on trade contracts whenever

domestic supplies threaten to fall short, and risk-management practices featuring the use of futures and options contracts remain in their infancy among the area's producers and commercial users.

Slow start

Only a single transaction occurred on the Black Sea wheat contract's first full trading day, taking place at \$254.50 per metric tonne shortly before 9:00 a.m. Chicago time.

This price placed the contract virtually halfway between the CME's domestic wheat contract -- one of the cheapest and most widely traded wheat futures in the world -- and the European milling wheat contract traded on NYSE Liffe, traditionally the world's most expensive wheat futures contract.

It can be assumed that the CME was hoping for slightly better volumes than the estimated three contracts (408 metric tonne) that took place amid the sole transaction on its opening day, but the fact that there's a new tradable entity available to global wheat traders that is anchored to physical supplies in one of the world's critical -- and more volatile --producing and exporting regions marks a major milestone in the global grains arena.

Straddling continents

The group of countries that make up the Black Sea "bloc" of wheat merchants --mainly Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine -- are not new to the wheat-growing scene.

Indeed, farmers have been cultivating wheat and numerous other crops across the region's "Black Earth" for more than a century, and so have had their fair share of bumper and failed harvests. But over the past 20 or so years, the region has transformed its status on the export stage from a bit-part player accounting for 5-10 % of world trade to a dominant participant originating roughly 25 to 30% of world wheat exports.

This emergence as an export powerhouse was brought about in part by large infrastructure expansions in Russia and Ukraine that have allowed a more orderly flow of grain from across

the vast Eurasian Steppe to port facilities across the Black Sea and out to markets as far afield as South America and Asia.

But rapid demand growth in key areas such as North Africa and the Middle East has also spurred Black Sea-area export growth. Combined wheat imports into North African nations such as Algeria, Egypt and Morocco have nearly doubled since 1990 from roughly 12 million metric tonne per year to a projected 20-21 million tonne in 2012.

Considering that total wheat exports out of Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine are projected to come in at around 30.5 million tonne this year, the North African market alone represents an enormous incentive for the region's exporters, especially since those destinations lie a relatively short vessel journey away.

But Black Sea traders also have fairly direct access -- through the Suez Canal -- to markets farther afield, such as South Asia and Indonesia, which are large net importers of wheat and other grains.

The relatively low freight rates resulting from its closer proximity to many major destinations further strengthen the area's competitive appeal.

The entry into the Mediterranean also opens up Europe as another potential market, and highlights the Black Sea as a key hub for access to a number of key continents and markets for traders in the region. It is this accessibility to major populations that gives the Black Sea wheat contract its promise, and is why the region will remain a closely monitored barometer of global trade potential in the years ahead.

Teething - and credibility - problems

As old as the region is in terms of wheat production, many of the players in the area continue to make amateur mistakes when it comes to international trade decisions.

During the drought-ravaged growing season of 2010 -- when the world's top importers were in

dire need of steady wheat supplies -- Russia and Ukraine reneged on trade agreements and halted or slowed exports of wheat for several months.

11 JUN, 2012, 03.35AM IST, REUTERS

Dry weather in US Midwest grain belt to cut production

CHICAGO: A dome of heat is set to hover over the US Midwestern grain belt next week at a time when the earliest planted corn crop will begin to pollinate, raising the stakes in a market already fired up over a lack of rain last month.

While weather conditions in the Midwest will take centre stage, traders will also watch the US Department of Agriculture's supply-demand report on Tuesday updating ending stocks and South American grain output.

The USDA monthly report would also update its estimate of winter wheat production in the United States, with the wheat harvest in the southern Plains advancing. Analysts were expecting a slight decline in production due to dry weather.

The primary focus will be on weather. Last week, a lack of rain in the Midwest helped propel Chicago Board of Trade corn futures to their biggest weekly gain in just over a year. "It's all about the weather. 50% of the Midwest is short to very short in moisture. The crop's condition is deteriorating and it needs rain," said grains analyst Tim Hannagan of PFGBest in Chicago.

He was expecting the condition of the corn crop in the good-to-excellent category to drop 3 percentage points in the USDA's weekly crop progress report on Monday. Ratings in that grouping were at 70% in the latest week. It began with 77%, 2%age points higher than the five-year average for that category.

Traders have been building risk premiums in corn futures as high heat and dry weather stressed the crop.

THE HINDU Business Line

Godrej Agrovet puts drip irrigation foray on hold

Our Bureau



Coimbatore, June 10:

Godrej Agrovet Ltd (GAVL), which is part of Godrej Industries Ltd (GIL), has put its proposal to enter the drip irrigation sector on hold citing adverse drip irrigation market conditions.

However GAVL said it would monitor the industry conditions and keep an open mind about future entry into the sector.

In a presentation made by GIL at an investor and analyst meet held recently, a copy of which was made available to the stock exchanges, the company said GAVL had evaluated various

opportunities in the sector. This included potential acquisitions, joint ventures and greenfield operations.

During this time, 'drip irrigation market conditions have steadily worsened' and subsidies were 'bottlenecked by State governments', the receivables by drip irrigation companies have skyrocketed and many 'commoditised players' have entered the market. The company said that in the 'light of changing circumstances', GAVL had decided to put its foray into drip irrigation activity 'on hold'.

It said 'for the time being', GAVL would focus on distribution of high quality drip irrigation to its oil palm farmers across the country. GAVL would continue to monitor the drip irrigation industry conditions, "keeping an open mind regarding future market entry", the company said in its presentation. Godrej Industries said GAVL's oil palm sales had been witnessing a rapid rise and from Rs 115 crore in FY 2010-11, it had jumped to Rs 224 crore during the last year, a 94.3 per cent increase. During 2011-12, more than 7,000 hectares of new area was brought under oil palm cultivation by GAVL including States such as Gujarat, Karnataka and Maharashtra.

This was a sharp jump over the two previous years when the new areas brought under oil palm cultivations were much less – 4,751 hectares in 2009-10 and 3,993 hectares in 2010-11.

Outlining priorities for oil palm cultivation, GAVL said that increasing area of cultivation, especially in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Gujarat, launching oil palm R&D focussing on harvesting and intercropping and distribution of high quality fertiliser and drip irrigation to oil palm farmers, were some of the activities it would focus on.

Training on uses of jackfruit

Mangalore, June 10:

A one-day training programme on jackfruit will be conducted in Mangalore on June 12. A press release said here that Krishi Vijnana Kendra, Mangalore, will conduct a training programme on the 'uses of jackfruit and value addition' from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

There will be demonstrations on value-addition to jackfruit at the training programme. Interested farmers can contact the Kendra for more details, it added.

Global soyabean output to decline to record low



New Delhi, June 10:

Global soyabean production is expected to decline by 10 per cent to a record low of 240 million tonnes in 2011-12 season due to adverse weather and low yields in the main producing nations such as Brazil, China and the US, United Nation's body FAO has said.

The world is estimated to have harvested 265.3 million tonnes of soyabean in 2010-11 crop season (October-September), Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) said.

"Overall, global soy production is bound to decrease by almost 10 per cent, one of the steepest year-on-year falls on record," the agency pointed out in its latest Food outlook report.

The production in the US is expected to decline due to lower plantings and poor yields, it added.

While, the output in South America's three main growers, Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay is forecast to fall owing to exceptionally dry weather caused by the La Nina phenomenon and decimated yields in some of the key growing areas, despite an increase in area, FAO said.

In China there is a marked drop in its soyabean output mainly a result of further cuts in area, it said.

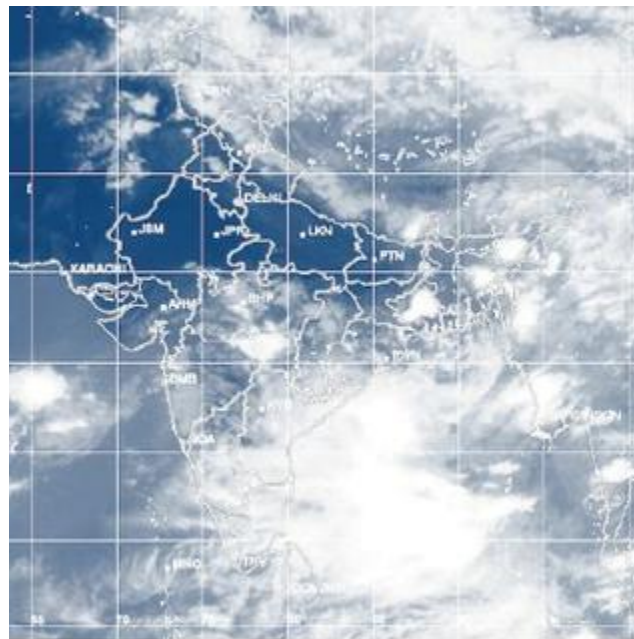
According to the global body on the farm sector, India is the only country which is forecasting a positive trend.

“This leaves India as the only important soyabean producer reporting an increase in production,”
FAO noted.

According to the latest estimates by India’s Agriculture Ministry, the country is expected to harvest 12.23 million tonnes of soyabean in the 2011-12 crop year (July-June) as compared to 12.73 million tonnes in the 2010-11 crop year.

FAO has also forecast that the total oilseed output worldwide is expected to fall by almost 4 per cent to 440.2 million tonnes in 2011-12 crop season from 457.3 million tonnes in the year-ago period.

Monsoon likely to revive as week progresses



India Meteorological dept picture at 15-30 hrs

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JUNE 10:

Hold-up in the monsoon continued for a fourth day over peninsular India, but may lift over the next three days as flows strengthen.

The offshore trough along the Konkan to south Karnataka coast made for a feeble formation on Sunday, signalling the weakened state of monsoon.

LOST MOMENTUM

But the seasonal weather system is busy recouping the momentum it had lost to a freak cyclone spinning up along its way in south Indian Ocean.

Piloting showers of a reviving monsoon would start bearing down on the west coast as well as east and east-central India over the next few days.

The rain spell may start peaking towards the weekend, with a full-fledged monsoon current entering east-central India.

A good augury is the changing coordinates of a rain-bearing cyclonic circulation, which has moved in from east to drop anchor over west-central Bay of Bengal.

From here, it would be ideally positioned to probe the southeastern coast and, as per some forecasts, even penetrate into peninsular India with a rain-head.

FURTHER ADVANCE

But its behaviour needs to be monitored and ascertained over the next few days for taking a final view in the matter.

Meanwhile, the northern limit of the monsoon continued to be stuck across Harnai, Satara, Belgaum, Agumbe, Madikeri, Kodaikanal and Gangtok on Sunday.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said that conditions are favourable for its further advance interior Karnataka and entire Tamil Nadu over the next three days.

It would also cover parts of south Andhra Pradesh, entire south Bay of Bengal and more parts of central and North Bay of Bengal during this period.

HEAVY RAIN

An IMD weather warning said that heavy rainfall might lash one or two places over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands on Monday.

Forecast for the next two days predicts rain or thundershowers at many places over Kerala, coastal Karnataka, Konkan, Goa and coastal Andhra Pradesh.

Rain or thundershowers would also occur at a few places over south interior Karnataka and at one or two places over rest peninsular India.

The rains will scale up along the west coast, interior peninsula and adjoining east India from the weekend.